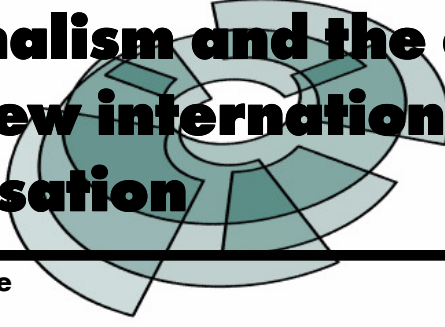


# Regionalism and the conditions for a new international organisation



By Thomas Lane

Article Number 34

The first assumption of this paper is that regionalism is not enough. It is a necessary but not a sufficient response to global problems. These are becoming increasingly severe and incapable of resolution except by an effective and acceptable form of world government. This is not to decry regionalism which can offer solutions to many contemporary problems. In most parts of the world, indeed, regional governance is in its infancy and has great potential. But in Europe, where regionalism is most advanced, it is clear that it needs supplementing if major global problems are to be successfully confronted. Regionalism should be seen as a necessary staging post *en route* to world government. Global government, it is important to stress, is an idea whose time has come. This does not mean that global government will emerge from present conditions within a short time frame, but it does mean that the time is now ripe for placing discussion of a new world order on the agenda since the threats to world security are many and pressing.

The urgency in the present situation can be exemplified, first by the use of analogy, and second, by reference to the extreme nature of contemporary problems. Each of these will be considered in turn. But first we should ask ourselves why the idea of world government seems to have lost its appeal to the contemporary mind. Equally, why only half a century or so ago did the notion of world government grab popular attention, and

why did supporters of federalism at a regional level automatically believe that these regional arrangements needed to be supplemented or 'capped' by a world federation.

It is well known that federal movements were at their strongest, in terms of popular support, in the late 1930s and immediately after the Second World War, under the leadership of Patrick Ransome, Lord Lothian and Clarence Streit, among many others. A common feature of these movements, in Britain, the United States and mainland Europe, was the assumption that federal governments in different regions of the world, starting with Europe, would ultimately form the basis of a world federation. The 'Preliminary Draft of a World Constitution' produced in Chicago in 1946-48 'proposed a unified world policy, administered and represented largely by reliance on the authority of regional units, thereby overcoming the destructive tendencies of nation states without risking the totalitarian potentialities of a more centralized world government'. [1] European federalists, such as the Union of Polish Federalists, made contact in 1949 with an organization called 'World Movement for World Government' during its congress in Stockholm. [2] Across the Atlantic a merger between various world federalist groups was effected, the name of the new organization being the United World Federalists. [3] Lest it be thought that these groups were composed of cranks and enthusiasts, full of half-baked ideas and on the margin of practical

politics, we should remind ourselves that in June 1949 64 Democrats and 27 Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives declared that it was a fundamental objective of U.S. policy to support the development of the United Nations into a world federation open to all nations, one which was 'adequate to preserve peace and prevent aggression through the enactment, interpretation and enforcement of world law'. [4] Two years earlier, in September 1947, R W G Mackay, a British Labour MP and ardent supporter of European federalism, tried to persuade the Labour Party that the credibility of the Party's foreign policy could be restored only by elevating the UN into a real world government instead of an organization based on the 'sovereign equality of all [...] states'. [5]

It is no exaggeration to state that virtually every federalist or even confederalist organization in the two decades covering the pre-war and post-war worlds was convinced of the necessity for world government. Jerzy Jankowski, a distinguished Polish federalist thinker, may be considered representative. He was in the vanguard of support for regional federations in Europe but was convinced that the freedom and security of individual nations could 'be permanently secured only within the framework of a world wide-system of equal rights [...] the guardianship of these rights to be entrusted to a world supranational organization composed of larger and smaller re-



gional federations'. [6] For these writers world government meant a world *federal* government, composed of regional organizations or great states combining together to form a 'supranational, voluntary and decentralized international organization'. As Churchill put it, the regional organizations would provide the pillars for 'the dome of the temple of peace'. [7] World government certainly did not mean a centralised and possibly authoritarian body dominated by the superpowers, still less an ineffective world organization in which each member would wield a veto, and above which 'only a babel of harsh voices could be heard'. It was made explicit in these writings that, as in the regional federations, there should be a transfer of some powers to the central bodies to ensure that the functions of the world government were effectively executed. As Bertrand Russell correctly commented, the most difficult and painful step in the creation of an international authority, the partial surrender of national sovereignty, was rigorously confronted by contemporary advocates of world government. [8]

The appeal of world government in the pre- and post-war worlds arose out of the three Cs, cataclysm, crisis and catastrophe. The fear of an impending cataclysm before the War, the World Crisis, in Churchill's words, during the war, and the catastrophic results of the War, combined to impose on European minds the conviction that the old order was gone forever and had to be replaced by a new world guaranteeing security, economic abundance and an end to internecine conflict. But surely, in the circumstances of the time, the idea of a European regional organization was revolutionary enough? Why press on with seemingly grandiose

dreams of a new world order? It was precisely because of the profound nature of the psychological upheavals of the time that all possibilities for a new order were contemplated.

The consequences of the Second World War for European mentalities were indeed revolutionary. And once in the revolutionary mode federalist thinkers were uninhibited in their desire for a brave new world which would not be confined to Europe. Virtually every country in Europe, excepting Great Britain and Switzerland, had been subject either to occupation by enemies or by enemies purporting to be friends. Mass killings, deportations, imprisonments, semi-starvation, consignment to slave labour, and the attempted destruction of national cultures were characteristic of the periods of occupation. The painful nature of these experiences, continued over so many years, had a powerful impact on popular ideas and attitudes. Nation states which had failed in their main objective, to offer security to their populations, were discredited, and no one could envisage that a Europe composed of a number of such relatively small states could offer effective defence against future aggressors. In this fertile soil the seeds of federalism were sown. In Western Europe the emergence of the idea of European integration has been well charted, and it is unnecessary to describe the process here. The experience of East Central Europe is less familiar and it is worth a brief discussion since it illustrates well the revolutionary mentality emerging after the War. This is where the argument by analogy, referred to in the first paragraph, becomes relevant.

K C Wheare, in his seminal book on federalism, argued that there were six prerequisites for the creation of a 'federal spirit'. These were: a sense

of military insecurity and a need for a common defence; the desire for independence coupled with the idea that foreign threats necessitated a union; hopes for economic advantage; the existence of some form of political association; a common geographical neighbourhood; and a similarity of political and social institutions. One could add a community feeling based on such factors as ethnicity, language, religion and history. Collectively these prerequisites create a structure of mutual sympathies and loyalties, in Deutsch's term, a 'we feeling'. The experience of East Central Europe during and after the Second World War helped to create such a 'we feeling' among émigrés from the region, and from that emerged the idea of a federal or confederal government for the area. [9]

This 'we feeling' has also been described as cohesiveness, arising from the bonds of solidarity and similarity. In this connection East Central European states during and after the war shared 'a common fate and a common misery'. They were subject to the same oppression, after the war, from the same Kremlin source, their political and economic structures were transformed into the same patterns, and the pre-war divergence in these structures between, for example, Poland and Czechoslovakia, was partially corrected by the effects of Soviet economic and social policy. [10] Before the war both Streit and Lothian referred to 'federalism through suffering', meaning that federal forms of government would come about when enough people had suffered enough pain. The experience of East Central Europe is a good illustration of this observation. [11]

What the states of East Central Europe did not share at that time, but something they needed to acquire if





a federal structure were to be effective, was a democratic system of government. Federalism has to grow from the people's wishes if it is not to rest on shaky foundations. National, linguistic and cultural divisions could not be abolished by fiat – they had to lessen spontaneously to the point where a supranational form of government could be seen as the embodiment of popular will, not as an alien imposition. In this light, there can be none of the solidarity required of a federal system if the member states are part democratic and part authoritarian. [12] This is why constitution-making in the absence of a broad popular will is largely redundant. Federation must be an expression of community, not the other way round. That is why contemporary federalists who wish to push through a European Constitution without recourse to referenda in individual member states are profoundly mistaken.

Wheare's prerequisites of military insecurity, desire for independence and hopes for economic advantage were all present in East Central Europe during and after the War. Emigres from the region believed that small states had as much right to life as large states, but the relative powerlessness of small states prevented them from enjoying independence and security. Only through close association between these states could their liberty and identity be preserved. Only through unity could they resist the pretensions of imperialistic states to exert direct control or to create spheres of influence in their region. Furthermore, federal systems under which the separate states join together to perform certain functions helped to establish checks and balances and to strengthen defences against external enemies. Since the states had failed dismally to maintain

peace, they must be prepared to join together to defeat war. [13]

The post-war émigré writers also claimed that federation would guarantee economic prosperity, employment and welfare. An economic bloc in East Central Europe would widen markets, strengthen industry and reinforce the region's competitiveness in international trade. The essential thing was to reduce the density of the population on the land and to enable it to work in newly-established industries, thus increasing productivity and competitiveness. [14] Economic unity was profoundly important in fortifying political union; the latter could not survive if there was economic competition, but by contrast, economic unification would strengthen the foundations for a political agreement. By working together economically, states would learn how to work together in other spheres, a perception of Jean Monnet's which was crucial in the construction of the EEC. Choosing economics for the first stage of supranational integration would maximise the benefits that participating nations would derive from institutionalised cooperation, at minimum cost to political independence. By making clear economic gains by working together, populations would be disposed to take the next steps to political union. [15]

At this point we return to the initial question: having established the necessity for regional unions, why did advocates of regionalism go on to demand that regional unions were not enough and would have to be supplemented or crowned by a world organization? The response centred round the idea of world unity. Federalists spoke about the biological unity of the human species, coupling this with the physical unity of the world, which was the product of aviation, radio, the sci-

ences, modern techniques of production, and the release of atomic energy. Geographical distances were deprived of their former significance. The development of mass production called for the creation of large economic units beyond national boundaries. Factors which interested and affected people, for good or ill, were not simply local, national or regional, but international. There was therefore a common destiny for humanity, a world indivisibility. A humanity divided into numerous states persisted in acting egotistically and individualistically. There was, accordingly, 'an anachronistic divergence between pluralist state centrism and the physical unity of the world'. To overcome this divergence the world needed, according to Kant, 'a legislator, a universal law, a judge and a sanction.' [16] At the end of the Second World War much contemporary European opinion had accepted Kant's prescription and was prepared to accept the possibility of a world federalist government composed of regional federations.

Arguing by analogy we can claim that the contemporary world is approaching the state that Europe was in immediately after the Second World War, ready for an innovative approach to government in face of almost insuperable problems. Of course, one can argue that the European mentality had been produced as a result of hundreds of years of bruising shared experience, and that it would be quite unrealistic to suppose that the world as a whole could approach that collectivist mentality in a fraction of the time. On the other hand, the last decades have seen a rapidity of change in every aspect of life which is probably unprecedented in global history. Arguably, the continuing and speedy transformation of the world's security, economic and





political structures demands a matching response from governments and peoples.

And here we take up the second part of the argument referred to at the outset, namely the extreme nature of contemporary problems, most of which reflect the process of globalisation.

Globalisation has been described as 'both the compression of the world, and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole'. It refers to the widespread and profound changes taking place in the recent past which have bound all parts of the world together more intensely than ever before. [17] This transformation leaves us with an uneasy feeling that change is out of control, subject to no effective regulation, and hazardous to the world's environment, human welfare and cultural diversity. If globalisation is, as one former French Prime Minister put it, the law of the jungle, then our democracies 'must tame it, harmonize it, civilize it'. [18] However, 'our democracies' can only establish this civilizing process by combining together to establish more effective governmental organizations of an international or supranational type at regional and global level. Probably these global organizations would lead to a more peaceful, just and habitable world, as the Commission on Global Governance put it in 1992. Sceptics about world government might be tempted to endorse the criticism of Felix Gross's 1945 proposal for a federal system for Europe, namely that it was 'impractical, a dream, absurd'. But in the light of subsequent European developments, where a regional government with substantial federal elements has indeed been established, we would be unwise to allow our scepticism free rein. [19]

The challenges facing us as citizens of the world at the beginning of the twenty first century will impel us, sooner or later, to introduce radically different forms of government. The challenges encompass a multitude of global problems ranging from environmental degradation to the deepening impoverishment of an underclass, from the relative decline of the nation state vis-à-vis the powerful transnational corporations (TNCs) to the cultural homogenisation of the world spearheaded by western media and manufacturers, and from the dominant role of a hyperpower to the acute problems posed by international terrorism. In the face of such challenges, there is a widely-held belief that existing global institutions are either ineffective though well-meaning, like the United Nations, or effective but undemocratic, like the IMF, World Bank, and the G8. [20]

It is generally acknowledged that environmental problems have to be tackled by international organizations since they affect everyone on the planet. Pollution, ozone depletion, acid rain, climate change and the results of nuclear accidents do not stop at national frontiers. It follows that global solutions are needed. State governments have accepted that they are incapable of solving these problems on their own and have combined together at the Rio Earth Summit, Kyoto, and follow-up meetings to establish targets for reducing environmental degradation. The question is whether, in the face of resistance from some quarters, the existing regulatory procedures will be effective. If they are not, a more demanding regulatory regime will be required. On the positive side, however, it is environmental problems which have done most to stimulate a world consciousness, a feeling among large numbers of the world's

population that they live in the same world, are affected by the same phenomena, and share a common humanity.

But environmental problems, though common to global humanity, are not evenly distributed. Industrialized and industrializing countries are degrading the environment disproportionately. Moreover, the damage resulting from global warming falls more heavily on certain regions than others; for example rising sea levels will particularly affect low-lying coast lines and river deltas, and reduced rainfall will affect agricultural output. Decisions can only be made at global level to help these regions overcome their specific problems, or to put it more portentously, to implement a policy of redistributive justice. [21]

Another apparent effect of globalisation has been the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and the deepening chasm between the affluent countries of the First World and the impoverished less-developed states. The share of the poorest 20 per cent. of the world's population in global income fell from 2.3 per cent to 1.4 per cent. between 1989 and 1998 while the proportion of the richest 20 per cent. rose. In sub-Saharan Africa 20 countries have lower incomes per head in real terms than they had in the late 1970s. In the world as a whole one billion people live on less than one dollar a day and 120 million children never attend school. Some TNCs sell goods in less developed economies that are controlled or banned in industrial countries. The poor countries receive low quality drugs, destructive pesticides, and cigarettes with a high tar and nicotine content. Reformers want enhanced global co-operation to tackle poverty and to refocus the current approach to aid, trade, and





economic development to ensure that globalisation works for the poorest. This means, inter alia, that less developed countries must have full access to the markets of developed countries, and benefit from improved standards of health and education. [22]

One of the most visible manifestations of globalisation is the TNCs, which present a major problem of regulation and control. The turnover of TNCs is larger than the GNP of most states, which enables them to exert considerable leverage over governments anxious to attract investment, trade, employment and new technology. TNCs exert a kind of 'parallel authority' alongside state governments over economic management, and have the power to determine who gets what, when and where since they can make and break local communities through their investment decisions. [23] It is no exaggeration to say that TNCs can and do determine the fortunes of less developed economies, and shape economic evolution in the developed world. The planet is currently at the stage of the United States in the 1890s which had to confront the challenge to political authority represented by the great corporations, 'the malefactors of great wealth' as Theodore Roosevelt called them. Dwarfing the state governments where they were located, the only effective means of popular control was through new legislation at federal government level, such as the Sherman Antitrust Act. Today, national states are in a very similar position to the separate states of the United States in the 1890s; they can only provide part of the necessary framework of rules and regulations for the conduct of TNCs. [24]

Globalization has enabled these giant corporations to minimize regulation by playing off one state

against another. If even the larger states are finding the balance of power shifting against them in their relations with TNCs, how powerless are the smaller states whose sovereignty is no more than a 'courteous pretence'. [25] If the economic world has become increasingly unified, the political world of the nation states has become more fragmented under the impact of decolonisation and desovietization, leading to the ineffective management of the global system of production and exchange. It therefore follows that if the corporations are to be brought back within the ambit of popular will we must, in the words of Anthony Appiah, 'explore ways of constructing a political basis for democratic action across national boundaries'. [26] To put it another way, the globalisation of economic relations should acquire 'a corresponding political skeleton' at the global level. [27] New agencies are required to re-establish democratic control over irresponsible economic actors. The vacuum at the heart of the international economy, Susan Strange believes, is not adequately filled by inter-governmental institutions. The first step in filling the vacuum is the establishment of regional forms of government, which is a rising phenomenon in the contemporary world. [28]

Another important challenge facing the world is the current political posture of its one superpower, the United States. One must be careful to differentiate between the policies of the present administration and possible alternative administrations in the future which may be more sensitive to world opinion. Nor do we need to discuss the ideas of that growing body of world opinion which claims to hate America. But one thing should be abundantly clear to those who have studied United States his-

tory in the twentieth century, and this has become even clearer since the end of the Cold War. It is that the United States is an empire, an informal empire of course, but still an empire. Its activities have become less restrained and cautious since the fall of Soviet communism, and non-Americans have become more critical of these activities as the threat from Moscow has weakened. For many the United States is seen as the agent of globalisation, or to put it in Gore Vidal's words, the 'Pentagon is the supreme military command of capitalist globalisation'. [29] Before we reject such comments as mere hyperbole, we should remember the title of Dean Acheson's memoirs, *Present at the Creation*. By creation he meant the construction of the world in which we live, with its plethora of international economic and social organizations, which the United States was instrumental in creating and in which it has a decisive voice. This is, in fact, a world fit for American corporations to function as buyers, sellers and investors across national boundaries. In the middle of the 19th century Britain practised what Gallagher and Robinson called 'the imperialism of free trade'. This is a pretty exact description of the world created by the United States, with one exception. Whereas the British after 1846 removed all tariffs and quotas and threw open their markets to the world, ruining their agriculture in the process, the United States has maintained a degree of protection while demanding the Open Door everywhere else.

Another feature of our contemporary world is the role of the United States as world policeman. There has been no systematic rationale for such a role, apart from the very recent doctrine of pre-emptive strikes. But we can approach such a rationale if we





think of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, enunciated in 1904 during one of President Theodore Roosevelt's frequent moments of exasperation with the conduct of some of his Latin American neighbours. He asserted that the United States, in Hugh Brogan's paraphrase, had a right 'to do what it liked to, with or in Latin American countries, so long as it could plead its own interests or an ill-defined duty to police the western hemisphere on behalf of the civilized world'. [30] Privately he said he would like to spank those wretched little republics. In 1998 the United States was spanking 75 countries, accounting for 52% of the world's population, in the form of sanctions for what it considered unacceptable behaviour. [31] The United States has, in effect, globalised the Roosevelt Corollary. But opinion polls suggest that the United States does not command support in world opinion for this self-proclaimed role. Even those like Simon Jenkins who value the United States' role as global intervener of last resort worry when it loses a sense of proportion in the face of external threats. Currently there is a widespread perception that the United States is part of the matrix of global problems rather than offering a solution to them. This is tragic for those who have believed in the benevolence and capacity for good of the American republic.

The U.S., therefore, currently does not have the right credentials to step into the gap existing at the heart of global government. The United States is not a monolith, but it often appears to be so to other countries. The rest of the world is heterogeneous, pluralistic and, in aspiration, multipolar. Any form of global government has to take account of this. And it must reckon with the wishes of

the poorest countries, as Jacques Chirac has urged, creating at international level the dialogue which is fundamental to democratic life. [32]

Many people would accept that an effective global government would help us to meet the challenge of globalisation. But wishing it does not make it happen. How can we proceed from our present system of individual states cooperating in global or regional organizations of an international, not supranational, character, to a world government which to be effective must be supranational? World government enthusiasts have approached this problem by drafting complex global constitutions and calling for universal constituent assemblies to ratify them. [33] This kind of approach was common in Europe before Jean Monnet played a more realistic hand. It is doomed to failure because it commands little popular support and cannot avoid the accusation of excessive centralisation and uniformity. Hence an alternative approach is called for which builds on existing trends in governmental structures and provides a practical means of combining centralised authority with local diversity. The way forward is through the development of regional structures throughout the world, and the ultimate combination of these structures in a world federation. In this way a link will be created with much mid-twentieth century federalist thought.

How realistic is such a scenario? First of all, timing is of critical importance. It is not suggested here that a world government will emerge fully formed in the foreseeable future. Rather, I argue that global problems have to be tackled globally, that the increased urgency of these problems will enforce action on a world which is increasingly open to radical solutions, and that public opinion will

become convinced that a federal system of government will offer the best solution to the complexity and intractability of contemporary global problems. If we ask if Wheare's six pre-requisites for federalism are present today we find that some are present and some not. Using a broad definition of security we can say that the world feels under threat from manifold dangers. There is a desire for control and the efficient and consensual exercise of power. There are economic advantages to be gained from union and there are growing examples of close cooperation between states and regions to tackle global problems. The common geographic neighbourhood is now the whole world under the impact of mass travel, communication and the web. There is no similarity of social and political institutions but there is a growing commitment to the protection of human rights. The 'we-feeling' is growing but is in its early stages of development. If federalism is indeed the result of suffering, the world has to experience the three Cs of cataclysm, crisis and catastrophe before it will be ready to take the long step towards a world federal government. It would of course be rational to anticipate disaster and to prepare for it by preventative action, but popular opinion is not yet ready for such a radical move.

The idea of federation by incremental stages was captured in the phrases used in the 1920s such as 'Towards universalism via regionalism' or 'From the national, through the regional, to the universal'. [34] We cannot know the precise form such a world government might take. It might in the first instance result from a confederation of various regional federations. But in the long term such an arrangement would be unlikely to work well since it would depend on





the willingness of regional federations to accept global policies. This would involve a return to the anarchy of the state system, although with fewer actors. The only solution to the problem of establishing and implementing a coherent global policy would be a federal global government. But, as we have argued, this in turn would require a cohesiveness and 'we-feeling' of the sort needed to ensure the success of regional federations. This might take many generations to develop or, conceivably, it might occur much more rapidly in the face of intensified global crises and the continued transformation of communications in the 'global village'.

Why should we prefer a global federal government to any other alternative global order? In 1944 Walter Lippmann posed the rhetorical question whether some 60 or 70 independent states (now swollen to almost 200) each acting separately, could form a universal organization for the maintenance of peace. 'I contend that they cannot', he wrote 'and that single sovereign states must combine in their neighbourhoods, and that the neighbourhoods must combine into larger communities, which then participate in a universal society.' [35] The advantage of this system over any other is that a federal government combines the existing trends towards larger and larger units with the continuing desire for local or national self-determination and the preservation of local identities. It combines unity with diversity, centralized efficiency with local autonomy. [36] Moreover it does not present us with a rigid model to be imposed, but rather offers us something much more open-ended, namely 'a continual quest for solutions, structures and processes'. Hence federal systems can take a

number of forms, and the EU, though showing some federal characteristics is, as the saying has it, *sui generis*, an organization of a distinctive and hybrid type. Sidjanski reminds us of Denis de Rougemont's conviction that federalism works through progressive adjustments, it is an attitude to others, it renounces hegemony, it combines heterogeneous elements, it preserves the rights of minorities and respect for the small. It is, in short, the opposite of the simplification and standardization imposed by a central power, and preserves the subtlety and complexity of existing relationships. As de Rougemont recalled, the adoption of a federal system does not destroy the nation states but goes beyond them, above them and beneath them, - up to a continental and then a global federation and down to sub-regional governments. [37] In this way the challenge of globalisation can be met without imposing the costs of standardization and uniformity. When Acheson spoke of being present at the creation, he knew that he had helped to create a new world, which was right for the time. We now stand at a turning point in the evolution of global affairs, and maybe we too can be present at a new creation.

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## About the author

Thomas Lane is Honorary Senior Research Fellow in Baltic Studies, Department of Languages and European Studies, University of Bradford. He may be contacted at [tlane@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:tlane@blueyonder.co.uk). The opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of Federal Union. First edition, January 2008.

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